

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, March 25, 2010

Asbestos Discovery Prompts State Hospital Patient Moves

Following the discovery of asbestos during a construction project earlier this week at the Wyoming State Hospital, certain patients and staff are being moved today to another building on the hospital's grounds as a precautionary measure.

During construction, testing confirmed evidence of asbestos in the mortar and texturing used to secure and cover sheetrock ceilings in the Karn Building. The construction is part of a \$4.2 million dollar project to renovate the building's heating, ventilating and air-conditioning system. While one section of the building was unoccupied during this phase of construction, other sections were housing patients.

"Because protecting the health and safety of our patients and our staff members is a critical priority, 20 patients and 48 staff members are being moved to an adjacent licensed patient care area on our grounds as a precautionary measure," said Bob Stahl, Wyoming State Hospital administrator. "We are confident these patients can be appropriately cared for in a secure manner in this location."

Stahl said asbestos has been found in both the occupied and non-occupied areas of the Karn Building. There is also evidence that dust from the de-construction of the ceiling in the construction area migrated into the occupied areas.

Construction has been halted, and an asbestos mitigation/abatement company began further atmospheric and dust testing today. The company will also be involved in cleaning up and removing contaminated materials.

As a result of the situation, admissions to the hospital's Criminal Justice Service program have been temporarily suspended.

The Wyoming State Hospital is one of five Wyoming Department of Health healthcare facilities located around the state. The hospital provides quality active treatment and services involving a variety of mental health disorders for Wyoming residents.

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